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the mundurucú of the cururú river

The Cururú River was permanently settled by the Mundurucú in the 1920's and 1930's through much the same processes that are observable today along the Cadiriri, Cabitutú, and Tropas rivers. The people who moved to the Cururú came largely from the southernmost savannah communities, and they settled on this particular stream because their dry-season residences and commercial bonds were there. When people move from the more northerly, contemporary savannah communities today, their choices of particular streams are dictated by the same reasons. There is no other cause for the differential migration that has split the northern and southern villages than proximity to certain rivers and corresponding ties to

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particular patrons. Two or three decades ago, all savannah communities were much alike and, except for differing places of dry-season residence, the populations of all maintained frequent contact through intermarriage, visiting, and joint participation in ceremonies. The cultural and social differentiation of Cururú and savannah dweller is thus quite recent.

There are two major points of difference between the migration to the Cururú and that to the more northerly rivers. First, in the former large numbers of people moved in a comparatively short period. Secondly, the patrons on the Cururú River were not Brazilian rubber traders, but a group of German Catholic missionaries who were deliberately attempting to attract the population and modify their culture. The missionaries achieved little success during their first ten to fifteen years of activity and attracted large numbers of Indians only after the price of rubber rose. On the other hand, the astuteness of this example of applied anthropology should be given recognition, for the missionaries offered high rubber prices and low-cost merchandise, and thereby accelerated the migration process.

THE NATURE OF THE MIGRATION

The population move to the Cururú occurred in piecemeal fashion, for, as in the contemporary savannahs, nuclear families or segments of extended families shifted and not whole villages. Co-resident groups of Indians who commonly collected rubber and fished on the banks of the Cururú during the dry season were lured into setting up permanent residences there by the attraction of trade goods and the persuasion of the missionaries, who sought thereby to bring the Indians more directly under their influence. Other rubber-season residents perceived the economic advantages of all-year occupation of the Cururú,

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and they too abandoned the annual return to the savannahs. The material prosperity of these emigrants lured more of their brethren into increased rubber collection, and greater numbers of Indians began to establish permanent residences on the river banks. There is little doubt that the same centrifugal tendencies that are currently operating in the remaining savannah communities did much to hasten the migration. In time, small villages were established on the Cururú River.

Those who tapped rubber on the Cururú tended, as the people of Cabruá today, to choose avenues near their close kinsmen and house mates. Unmarried sons worked with their fathers, and sons-in-law also had contiguous rubber trails; other relatives worked nearby if it was convenient. When these families shifted to permanent occupancy of the river shores, they maintained these affiliations and either lived in the same dwelling or built adjacent but separate houses. Other persons who had rubber avenues in the vicinity migrated later and chose to settle in these little hamlets. Although this might force them to walk for thirty or forty-five minutes to their daily labors, the presence of others afforded the opportunity to share in farinha-making equipment and, of greater importance, provided them with the companionship and social intercourse to which village life had accustomed them.

Other migrants to the Cururú settled in these villages also, but their rubber avenues were too far away to allow daily commuting, and they had to follow the familiar pattern of village residence in the rainy season and temporary habitation of the rubber avenue during the dry summer. This was no great inconvenience, because these dry-season houses were usually within a few hours of the village and were easily accessible by water. The benefits of water transportation could only be enjoyed if one had a canoe,